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**Testimony on ARIA Implementation and the Indo-Pacific Strategy**  
**Senate Foreign Relations Committee**  
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Good afternoon Chairman Gardner, Ranking Member Markey, and members of the committee. Thank you for this opportunity to update you on the Department of Defense's approach to the Indo-Pacific region and support to implementation of the Administration's Indo-Pacific strategy and the Asia Reassurance Initiative Act (ARIA). I would also like to take this opportunity to thank Assistant Secretary David Stilwell and Assistant Administrator Gloria Steele for their remarks. Our interagency efforts to develop the U.S. strategy and approach to the Indo-Pacific region have been an excellent example of interagency focus and cooperation. As we've worked to develop and implement a strategy that demonstrates the U.S. commitment to a free and open Indo-Pacific region, we have been aided in our efforts by bipartisan support from Congress. I'd like to commend this committee's efforts to support the passage of ARIA, which informs our whole-of-government approach to the region.

The ARIA demonstrates the U.S. commitment to a free and open Indo-Pacific, providing a comprehensive set of national security and economic policies to advance U.S. interests and goals in this critical region. Most importantly, the ARIA reassures our allies and deters our adversaries in the Indo-Pacific through promoting U.S. security interests, economic engagement, and values in the region. The Department of Defense is intently focused on supporting implementation of the ARIA and a broader, whole-of-government approach to the crucial Indo-Pacific region. The Department has been consistent in this approach, where Secretary Esper, and Secretary Mattis before him, have emphasized the Indo-Pacific as the priority theater, a point of view reflected in our National Defense Strategy (NDS) and in our robust engagement with the region.

The Department has articulated its role within this whole-of-government approach for the region through the Indo-Pacific Strategy Report (IPSR) released in June, coinciding with the Shangri-La Dialogue. This report is not a new strategy, but rather provides clarity on the NDS as it applies to the Indo-Pacific. As stated unambiguously in the report, "The Indo-Pacific is the Department

of Defense's priority theater. We have an enduring commitment to uphold a free and open Indo-Pacific in which all nations, large and small, are secure in their sovereignty and able to pursue economic growth consistent with international rules, norms, and principles of fair competition."

This free and open Indo-Pacific vision that is also enshrined in the ARIA is one that is based on principles of cooperation that are enduring, inclusive, and shared across the region and the world. This includes respect for sovereignty and independence of all nations, large and small; peaceful resolution of disputes; free, fair, and reciprocal trade and investment, which includes protections for intellectual property; and adherence to international rules and norms, including freedom of navigation and overflight. The Department is making this vision a reality by focusing our investments on preparedness, strengthening our alliances and partnerships, and empowering a regional security network.

First, when we talk about preparedness, we mean having the right capabilities in the right places to respond to crises, and to compete with and deter near-peer competitors. The Department, alongside our allies and partners, is diversifying our regional posture and investing in a more lethal, resilient, agile, and combat-effective Indo-Pacific force posture. We are increasing investments in contested domains like space and cyber, while preserving our advantages in undersea warfare, tactical aircraft, C4ISR, and missile defense to ensure the commons remain open to all in the Indo-Pacific. While we do not seek conflict, we know that having the capability to win wars is the best way to deter them. We want to ensure no adversary believes it can successfully achieve political objectives through military force.

A central theme of the NDS, and one that is predominantly reflected in both the Indo-Pacific strategy and the ARIA, is our focus on our alliances and partnerships. We are reinforcing our commitment to established alliances and partnerships, while expanding relationships with new partners that share respect for sovereignty, fair and reciprocal trade, and rule of law. We are committed to working with allies and partners to find ways to address common challenges, enhance shared capabilities, increase defense investment and improve interoperability, streamline information sharing, and build networks of capable and like-minded partners. Our mutually beneficial alliances and partnerships give a durable, asymmetric advantage that no competitor can match.

The Department is expanding collaborative planning and prioritizing requests for U.S. military equipment sales to deepen interoperability and training for high-end combat missions in alliance, bilateral, and multilateral exercises. The Department is looking to strengthen traditional close relationships with countries like Japan through integrating our NDS implementation with Japan's National Defense Program Guidelines, important emerging relationships with countries like India through implementing its Major Defense Partner status and Singapore through increased access and training opportunities, and emerging partnerships with countries like Indonesia and Vietnam. U.S. Navy forces tested interoperability, command and control, and key maritime security tasks with the ten ASEAN Member States during the first-ever ASEAN-U.S. Maritime Exercise in September. The Department is also enhancing our engagement in the Pacific Islands to preserve a free and open Indo-Pacific region, maintain access, and promote our status as a security partner of choice.

Beyond the Indo-Pacific, the Department is engaging allies and partners – as seen by recent senior leader engagements to Europe and the Middle East, for example. China and others recognize U.S. advantages, and are actively working to disrupt America's alliances and partnerships in Europe, the Middle East, and the Indo-Pacific. They also understand those advantages because they see them in action through initiatives like the Enforcement Coordination Cell in Yokosuka, Japan, a command center including representatives from the Republic of Korea, Australia, Canada, New Zealand, the United Kingdom, Japan, and France which are committed to enforcing UN Security Council Resolutions that prohibit North Korea's ability to unlawfully export coal and import refined petroleum in the maritime domain.

The Department also conducts routine freedom of navigation and other presence operations in the South China Sea (SCS), also strongly promoted in the ARIA, in which we are increasingly enjoying the participation and support of partners and allies. This has been particularly important in responding to steps Beijing has taken to militarize outposts in the SCS, where we want to make the investment China has made to operationalize an illegal expansive sovereignty claim as insignificant as possible. The Department continues to implement the Maritime Security Initiative (MSI), which has boosted key Southeast Asian partners' abilities to conduct maritime security and domain awareness operations.

Finally, the Department is taking steps to promote, strengthen, and evolve U.S. alliances and partnerships into a networked security architecture capable of deterring aggression, maintaining stability, and ensuring free access to common domains. From our tri-lateral relationships with Australia, Japan, and South Korea, to our work with Thailand co-organizing last month's ASEAN-U.S. Maritime Exercise, we are augmenting our bilateral relationships and building an interconnected Indo-Pacific.

The United States continues to support ASEAN centrality, as it "speaks with one voice" to promote a rules-based international order and maintain a region free from coercion. In fact, the IPSR aligns with ASEAN's Indo-Pacific Outlook, spearheaded by Indonesia, which emphasizes ASEAN centrality and promotes regional cooperation through existing ASEAN-led mechanisms. The United States and ASEAN share common values, and ASEAN is a key partner in promoting the values and policies enshrined in the IPSR. As ASEAN nations support one another to maintain the freedom, sovereignty, and territorial integrity of countries within the region, this cohesion strengthens ASEAN's voice.

A critical part of our engagement is meaningful work with various ASEAN-based institutions. From the East Asia Summit to the ASEAN Regional Forum and ASEAN Defense Ministers' Meeting-Plus and subordinate mechanisms, we seek to advance peace and security by working with ASEAN and partners across the region against common threats – including transnational crime, trafficking, terrorism, and maritime security. A particular focus is addressing ASEAN countries' desire to better share information with one another and to enhance regional maritime domain awareness. The Department also continues to cultivate intra-Asian security relationships that support common goals – whether maritime security, counter-terrorism, or counter-proliferation – across shared domains and in defense of shared principles.

As we strengthen our alliances and partnerships we are also taking the steps necessary to improve our military readiness and capabilities to reassure our allies and deter potential adversaries, complementing the substantive U.S. resource commitments provided by the ARIA. Strong deterrence is at the foundation of our regional, and indeed, our global approach, and Secretary Esper is clear in his emphasis on the Department's role in supporting our diplomats so they can engage and negotiate from a position of strength.

Given the long-term, consequential nature of the Indo-Pacific region to U.S. national security and emerging threats to the region's stability, the Department is sustaining its focus on the region in Fiscal Year (FY) 2020. The FY 2020 defense budget continues to execute the NDS by reprioritizing resources and shifting investments to prepare for a potential future, high-end fight. It also focuses on strengthening our alliances and attracting new partners to generate decisive and sustained military advantages in the Indo-Pacific through enhancing cooperation with allies such as Australia, Japan, and the Republic of Korea through ongoing engagements, their procurement of high-end U.S. platforms, and working with each to build missile defense systems that are increasingly interoperable with U.S. capabilities.

Finally, our approach to the region and our strategy to maintain a free and open Indo-Pacific region accounts for our relationship with China. China should and does have a voice in shaping the international system, as do all countries. However, in recent years, we have grown concerned by Beijing's strategic intentions and trajectory, including some activities in the region that we view as destabilizing and counterproductive—in the SCS, for example. Although the United States will continue to pursue a constructive, results-oriented relationship with China, we will not accept policies or actions that threaten to undermine a free and open Indo-Pacific that has benefited everyone in the region, including China. The ARIA is a significant tool that allows us to stand up for and defend that order, and we will encourage others to do the same; and although we are committed to welcoming cooperation from China where our interests align, we will compete, vigorously, where our interests diverge.

Beijing's approach – demonstrated by both words and deeds – stands in contrast to our vision for a free and open Indo-Pacific, and some of its activities seek to undermine principles that have benefited all nations, including China. We had patiently hoped the Communist Party of China would see the value of cooperative engagement, but its actions in Hong Kong, Xinjiang, the SCS and elsewhere have dashed that hope. We are competing with China because Chinese leaders have assessed that they are in competition with us – both our ideas and our capabilities – and they are developing capabilities designed to erode our advantages. Globally, Beijing seeks to shape a world consistent with its authoritarian model and national goals. We see China using its growing clout to change the behavior of other countries, realigning them with the Communist Party of China's preferences through persuasion, implication, and at times coercion. We see the domestic governance of the Communist Party of China rule as increasingly authoritarian where

human rights and dignity are concerned. China has begun exporting tools such as facial recognition software and nation-wide surveillance capabilities of all aspects of a person's life.

A competitive strategy with China is not meant to lead us to conflict. For the United States, competition does not mean confrontation, containment, nor must it lead to conflict. We seek to maintain competition as a stable deterrent that avoids conflict. While we compete vigorously with China, our military-to-military contacts are aimed at reducing risk and promoting international norms and standards. We will cooperate with China where our interests align while competing within a rules-based framework where our interests diverge. That said, the United States will continue to call out China's behaviors that are counter to the norms expected of all countries.

Our vision for the Indo-Pacific region excludes no nation. We seek to partner with all nations that respect national sovereignty, fair and reciprocal trade, and the rule of law. Although we accept that States will make some decisions that are not in our interests, we recognize that for the Indo-Pacific region to flourish, each nation in the region must be free to determine its own course within a system of values that ensures opportunity for even the smallest countries to thrive, free from the dictates of the strong. Our aim is for all nations to live in prosperity, security, and liberty, free from coercion and able to choose their own path.

The United States is a Pacific nation and has been one for centuries. We will remain committed to maintaining the security and stability in this all-important region. This is a view that has transcended political transitions and has maintained strong bipartisan support. During my tenure as Assistant Secretary, I have been encouraged by the leadership demonstrated by Congress and the bipartisan support for prioritizing the Indo-Pacific. I look forward to working with you on the specific measures you propose to enhance U.S. leadership in the Indo-Pacific region, like implementation of the ARIA.

Chairman Gardner, Ranking Member Markey, members of the committee, thank you for the opportunity to testify this afternoon. I look forward to your questions.